

Make a Difference



Strive for 100 Percent Engagement

Choose to be a leader!! Who me? That's right. At one point in time – not so long ago – leaders were designated, assigned, specified.

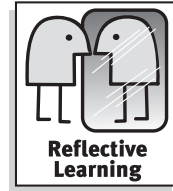
In today's marketplace of global competition, constant change and expanding customer choice, being a leader is something you choose to be (or not to be) right where you are. If customers (internal or external) are going to receive the service that they expect, it is up to you to step up to the bat.

When Harry Truman was president of the United States, we were not surprised when he put on his desk a sign that read, "The Buck Stops Here." What would your workplace be like if every person had a sign that read, "The Buck Stops Here"? What would it be like if there was 100 percent engagement?

The Gallup Organization regularly surveys the U.S. workforce to measure levels of employee engagement. "The latest figures show that only 30 percent of the U.S. workforce consists of engaged employees (loyal and productive). Over half – 54 percent – are not-engaged (just putting in time), while 16 percent are actively disengaged (unhappy and spreading their discontent)."¹

Why is such a high percentage of the workforce not engaged? Is it because old forms of security and certainty have disappeared and we haven't figured out how to operate standing on a bowl of Jell-O? Regardless, we all may be in need of new tools and processes to increase active engagement.

The Facilitative Way



Where do you find yourself in this survey:

- engaged?
- not-engaged?
- actively disengaged?

What about individuals you work with, your team, your department?

Perhaps you are fortunate and engagement levels are high in your workplace. But if not, have you thought about how to change things to reach 100 percent engagement?

Too often we think that more supervision, salary increases, higher status or better relationships in the workplace are the motivators for engagement. According to Frederick Herzberg² in “One more time: How do you motivate employees?,” these are “hygiene” or job satisfaction factors. But the factors, he says, that lead to extreme employee satisfaction or motivation for engagement are:

- achievement (receiving feedback that includes praise and recognition)
- the work itself
- responsibility (participating in communication, accountability, self-scheduling)
- advancement and growth (receiving new learning and unique expertise)

In these changing times new leadership strengths and interconnections between people and events are necessary to engage employees. “No society on the planet knows how to live with constant, radical change. It’s never been done before,” says William Van Wishard, president, WorldTrends Research.³

Create a New Context for Working Together

Change is now the norm. We are caught between the no longer and the not yet.

We have moved out of an industrial age and are overwhelmed by the information age. We struggle to make sense of it all. The to-do list never gets shorter and never gets done. How-to books are plentiful, and many suggest ways for you to do your job better. You need ways for you and your coworkers to learn how to think, talk and take action together. These skills are at the heart of facilitative leadership.

“Shared commitment to change develops only with collective capability to build shared aspirations. People start discussing ‘undiscussable’ subjects only when they develop the reflection and inquiry skills that enable them to talk openly about complex, conflictive issues without invoking defensiveness,” according to Peter Senge.⁴ The facilitative skills that support this collective capability lead to more involved engagement.

Being facilitative is a different way of interacting with coworkers and viewing a task. According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, “facilitate,” from the root word “facile,” is to “make easy or easier.” It means functioning with a mindset of serving others, allowing the group and the situation to “be in control.” As a manager, this emphasis on people skills is powerful. Instead of having to “know,” you need to build the capacity for more people to “be in the know.”

Facilitative leaders are engaged in:

- Asking questions to enrich engagement
- Sharing knowledge and information
- Linking minds
- Learning and unlearning

Ask Questions to Enrich Engagement

Norma Jean is looking for ideas on how her team can make more informed decisions. As a project leader in a large global asset management firm, she knows that her team members often have trouble remembering verbal instructions. She hopes to expand her skills so that communication in the team will improve. She is searching for ways to help projects move forward more efficiently and effectively.

The most poignant “Ah Ha” moment for her during a training class on facilitative skills is when Norma Jean realizes that leaders and managers don’t have to have all the answers themselves. When she hears the trainers and the class participants talking about how to use the resources and people that are in the group, she knows she has just learned a new way to think about her role with the team.

The facilitative way means shifting from “keeping control” to new ways of asking questions and relating to people so they can assume more responsibility. Helping a group of people face its challenges lets them build a clear picture of the situation so they move on actions.

The Facilitative Way

Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton⁵ state in a *Harvard Business Review* article that “most organizations have trouble bridging the knowing-doing (talk-action) gap ... because of the willingness to let talk substitute for action.” Further, they reaffirm that “leaders who do the work, rather than just talk about it, help prevent the knowing-doing gap from opening in the first place.”

Howard had just been in a training class that emphasized the importance of developing team ownership for a project. He decided to try out the concepts at his next team meeting and created a list of questions to keep the ideas rolling.

After setting up the brainstorming session, Howard launched in with the first question. He waited for ideas to pour out of people, but, instead, the team just looked at him. Howard chewed on his lip, anxiously waiting. Finally, Jane came up with an idea.

“Good,” Howard said, writing it down. “By the way, this reminds me of another idea. We should really do ...,” and he wrote down his own idea as well. Then Fred suggested something else and Howard wrote that down too. “I’ve had an experience with an idea like that back when I was working on ... The idea reminds me of this idea ...”

Every time a team member had an idea, Howard had an idea. He was so excited by the wealth of his own ideas that he didn’t seem to notice the room growing quieter and quieter. Taking over with his own ideas instead of listening to and honoring the team’s brainstorm had effectively shut down the creativity of the group.

Peter Drucker⁶ says that “managing yourself requires taking responsibility for relationships ... taking responsibility for communication. People do not know what other people are doing and how they do their work, or what contribution the other people are concentrating on and what results they expect. And the reason they do not know is that they have not asked and therefore have not been told.”

Share Knowledge and Information

John is sent to a training class to gain a new skill, to learn a new way of doing things. John comes back from training with new DOING but no new THINKING skills. He quickly gets busy and with time of the essence, John’s

same thinking kicks in. Soon he even falls back into the old doing rather than new doing. How can you get John to start THINKING about what he is DOING?

Thinking in new ways is hard, but it is a necessity in today's knowledge-based economy.

What we carry in our heads and share with others is what gets the job done: intellectual capital, knowledge work and intangible assets of skill, knowledge and information.

Without sharing and accumulating knowledge and learning, businesses keep “losing the recipe,” as hard-earned learning walks out the door when people change jobs or are let go.

Link Minds

The complexity and speed of change have made it impossible for one person to know it all. Issues are too complex for a simple “one size fits all” approach. Therefore, linking minds in order to think, talk and take action is critical. Everything is more connected, complex and diverse. Just one for instance: communication technologies have shifted our linkages. When a major shift takes place in the workplace, rumors fly between the people not in the communication loop, resulting in confusion and mixed messages.

When we think together, we can focus critical skills on real work situations. As a result, work gets done and practical learning happens. We have to understand what we collectively carry in our heads. The concepts we pull together corporately about making the right things happen are key to getting tasks completed.

Thinking together can be hard work. Since our work life may consume 25-40 percent of our week, it is helpful to make this chunk of time more effective and enjoyable. Without collective thinking on a problem:

- cynicism spreads
- people get disgruntled
- turnover increases
- burnout spreads
- things don't get done
- the things that can make a difference don't happen

The Facilitative Way

Learn and Unlearn

If you still think you are supposed to be making all the decisions, you will not be successful in learning how to be facilitative. Effective leadership requires learning and unlearning. Training often centers on learning and applying new skills, ignoring the unlearning that must take place first. *Fortune* magazine noted: “Companies expect middle managers to metamorphose, effective yesterday, into leaders ready to coach, motivate and empower. The problem is, few managers and companies understand the transformational process. Corporations underestimate the shift in mindset and behavioral skills that team leaders need.”⁷

Learning together can spark intrinsic motivation for employee achievement, recognition, involvement, role clarity, responsibility, advancement, growth, empowerment and results.

Shift from Facilitator to Facilitative

If we are to keep from boiling over, we have to step back and think (reflect) in order to learn new ways of producing results. This need to learn together is causing a major shift in our working together.

The First Wave

In the first wave of encouraging participation and engagement, the role of facilitator was created. This role grew out of the quality circles created as a result of the work of Dr. W. Edwards Deming in the 1950s in Japan, and from 1974 until his death in 1993 in the United States. The facilitator was responsible for orchestrating the process and helping a group achieve a desired outcome. The quality management movement pointed out the need for this role and popularized it. “Being facilitative” typically referred to the individual specifically assigned to manage the group process, as in:

“All right, now on this team we need a leader, recorder and facilitator.”

“The facilitator is the one concerned with the process.”

“Let’s bring in an outside facilitator for this retreat.”

“We need someone to facilitate this event.”

The Second Wave

The surf was up, as the second wave of “being facilitative” moved beyond an assigned role. We began to see that many people – not just one in a group or team – can decide and learn to be facilitative. This involves using a style of behavior that eases the way people think and take action together. The role of assigned facilitator evolved to becoming instrumental in showing others how to be more facilitative in their day-to-day work.

A Transformational Wave

A third wave is beginning to sweep the workplace. This wave combines being facilitative with being strategic and calls for facilitative leadership throughout an organization. Working together facilitatively and strategically means that thinking and action are tied to the organization’s strategy, mission and vision and the capacity of people to carry it out.

When working strategically, a group’s thinking and planning stays connected to:

- the historic – what has happened in the past in the organization and industry?
 - what was the original passion/plan?
 - what have been benchmarks along the way?
- the present – what is going on now?
 - what is the current mission/message?
 - what are current accomplishments?
- the future – what is needed and what are the priorities for the future?

In the third wave, being facilitative and strategic means asking the right questions and carrying out the strategic action. It sounds simple, but being facilitative, at its most fundamental level, is about changing your relationship with people and the relationship people have to the job.

**Being facilitative rests on the premise of talking with, not at, people.
In fact, in empowered teams everyone acts in a facilitative role.**

The Facilitative Way

Figure 1 shows the differences between a facilitative and a nonfacilitative approach.

Differences Between a Facilitative and a Nonfacilitative Approach

Facilitative Approach	Nonfacilitative Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• dialoguing along with giving a report• asking open-ended questions• sparking new thinking• linking ideas together• sparking motivation and passion• acknowledging everyone• moving a group to action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• giving a report• talking at people• controlling the conversation• isolating individual thinking• giving instructions• paying attention only to the important people• processing forever

Figure 1

The art and science of facilitation continues to evolve. Taking time to master facilitative skills and operate strategically can catalyze effectiveness in a complex, changing environment. Energy and enthusiasm will transform the working environment.

What It Means to Be “Facilitative”

Now we recognize the need for everyone to be adept at easing the way for people to think and take action together in a variety of interactions (from meetings to conversations) and in a variety of organizational roles (manager, customer service rep, team member, CEO).

Being facilitative starts with a decision to work together to achieve an outcome. It does not necessarily mean that everyone is involved in every decision. Being facilitative may mean asking for input for a decision that you need to make; a decision may be delegated to one or more people; or a decision may be made with the information available at the time.

Facilitative people:

- discern relevant patterns
- spot issues and options
- think comprehensively
- generate passion for the task
- operate with a stance of possibility
- reinforce esprit de corps

You are being facilitative when:

- you make a decision and then help others understand the decision and why it is needed so they can more effectively implement it.
- you ask people for their input and insights with the clear understanding that the ultimate decision is yours.
- you explain the criteria for an acceptable decision and turn the decision over to others, providing them with the responsibility and accountability necessary to get it done.

Know Your Way Around

It Starts with You

Anyone can decide to ease the conversation and work on behalf of the team. Team members, coworkers, managers, supervisors, team leaders or frontline workers can be facilitative. Facilitative skills can enhance participation in a meeting, a conversation in the hall, an informal discussion at lunch, a presentation or a workshop.

Do you make it easier for yourself and others to get the task done?

Do you help groups get unstuck?

Do you encourage dialogue and keep action happening?



When you think in terms of group ideas, do you:

- tap into everyone's useful reservoir of thinking?
- pay attention to each person's ideas?
- affirm each person's contribution?
- honor the unique gifts of each individual?

The Facilitative Way

- give people a sense of “we are in this together”?
- build on the ideas of the group to create something new?

Work Smarter

The art and science of working with others allows us to work smarter, not harder. According to David Perkins, getting smarter is a matter of “knowing your way around” different situations.⁸

You are probably already familiar with many of the challenging places you need to “know your way around,” for instance:

- decision-making – choosing between alternatives
- problem-solving – building bridges across the gaps
- explanation – finding insight and meaning
- problem finding – seeking and addressing potential flaws and weaknesses
- planning – formulating plans and organizing and allocating resources
- prediction – conceptualizing existing or known conditions to forecast likely outcome
- learning – integrating new information, concepts and skills

Knowing your way around facilitative leadership can make the difference in the interactions in your workplace. Figure 2 shows the new thinking and the new doing that are the result of knowing your way around facilitative leadership.

Take the BE–THINK–DO Journey

Deciding to be facilitative and strategic in the workplace is a journey that consists of many facets. First and foremost, it is a journey of learning about yourself, others and the task. It is a journey of risk, and therefore requires courage. It is a journey of building relationships. Finally, it is a journey of increasing capacity to get things done.

This journey changes your approach. You will decide to BE the hub of a wheel, not a tire(d) repair shop; you will THINK through perceptions in new ways; and you will DO the methods and techniques that win, rather than those that circle around, ultimately going nowhere.

This BE–THINK–DO journey gives you a facilitative advantage at the individual, team and organizational level.

Knowing Your Way Around

Facilitative Approach	The New Thinking	The New Doing
Mobilize Energy with the Dynamics Screen	<i>Comprehensive thinking</i> with organizational dynamics	Use leverage to inform strategic action
Orchestrate Interactions with an intentional script	<i>Intentional thinking</i> in advance about what needs to happen	Shape a team environment
Generate Reflection with a sequencing formula	<i>Facilitative thinking</i> that taps into people's natural thinking process	Focus creativity to unleash the power of multiple perspectives
Ignite Action with vision-reality tension	<i>Enthusiastic thinking</i> that harnesses the creative tension to make strategic choices	Strategically allocate the use of time, energy and resources
Capture Learning with a compelling story	<i>Reflective learning</i> , unlearning and relearning	Reenergize, remaneuver and sustain strategic action

Figure 2

Advantages for you as an individual:

- You don't need to have all the answers.
- You interact with coworkers and superiors with more confidence.
- You can take risks with courage by thinking through how to make things happen.
- You experience ways in which you can make a difference.
- You have more fun on the job.

Advantages for the team or work group:

- A team finds ways to move beyond an often confusing collection of individual opinions to reach a common understanding of a given task.
- A team feels confident in moving beyond discussion to action.
- A team both gives and receives feedback.
- A team saves time getting things done by thinking together before acting.
- A team discovers the joy of working together to reach a goal by working smarter, not harder.

The Facilitative Way

Advantages for the organization:

- Teams handle disputes and conflicts.
- Teams build collegial, inclusive relationships with customers and coworkers.
- People share a common purpose and know how to strengthen it.
- Effectiveness becomes the norm in handling change.
- Feedback moves up, down and across, constantly informing and improving teams and the organization.

Snowball Effect

To enhance this BE–THINK–DO journey, adopt an operating style that eases the way for people to think and take action together. As a result, others will start using these skills as well:

- instead of one facilitator at the head of the table, everybody around the table is facilitating the group process;
- instead of a person complaining, “why don’t they do something,” those around the table pick up responsibility;
- instead of one loud voice dominating the team, those around the table share insights.

Summary

The changing workplace in today’s information age makes facilitative leadership skills essential. By easing the way for conversations, by building active and empowered teams, by showing people the benefits of thinking and acting together, you create a better work life for yourself, your team and your organization. It starts with your decision to expand a mix of techniques, skills and approaches that will make working together more effective and satisfying.